

WASHINGTON, DC – Yesterday, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce marked up H.R. 1891, the Setting New Priorities in Education Spending Act, a bill introduced by Congressman Duncan Hunter (R-CA) that would eliminate 43 education programs that provide important services to students such as literacy enrichment, curriculum enhancement, and dropout prevention. Congressman Bobby Scott (VA-03) offered an amendment to restore the dropout prevention services that the legislation proposes to cut. Below is Congressman Scott's prepared statement for the introduction of the amendment:

"Mr. Chairman, the United States is currently facing a dropout crisis. Despite this reality, H.R. 1891, the Setting New Priorities in Education Spending Act proposes to cut three essential dropout prevention programs from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. That is why today I am offering an amendment — along Congressman Hinojosa and Congressman Grijalva — that will restore the dropout prevention services that those programs provide.

"Each year, approximately 1.23 million high school students fail to graduate with their peers — representing one-third of all high school students nationwide. The statistics are worse for high school students of color. Nearly half of the nation's African-American students and Latino students fail to graduate from high school with their peers.

"The dropout crisis that the United States is facing can be traced to a small percentage of the nation's high schools. Nearly 2,000 high schools — roughly 12 percent of all high schools in the United States — produce about half of the nation's dropouts. At these high schools, the number of seniors is routinely 60 percent less than the number of freshmen three years earlier. These so called "dropout factories" disproportionately fail high school students of color. Almost half of the nation's African-American students and nearly 40 percent of the nation's Latino students attend these high schools, while only 11 percent of White students do.

"Sadly, these dismal statistics are just the beginning of the story.

"The employment prospects for high school dropouts are bleak. Research shows that high school dropouts are much more likely to be unemployed than students who complete high school. Research also shows that high school dropouts who do find employment are much more likely to work at unskilled jobs that offer little opportunity for upward mobility, with their earning potential essentially remaining stagnant throughout their lifetime.

"Although obtaining a high school diploma is an important first step to becoming a productive member of the American workforce, it is increasingly not enough. According to recent studies, in a few years, two-thirds of all jobs and 90 percent of the fastest growing and best paying jobs will not only require a high school diploma but will also require at least some post secondary education. That means, that the employment prospects for high school dropouts are becoming even bleaker.

"The dropout crisis that the United States is facing negatively impacts the nation's global competitiveness. In today's global economy, one of the major competitive advantages the United States now enjoys is a relatively well-educated workforce. The United States cannot compete with wages in other countries. In addition, locating a business in the United States does not offer a major competitive advantage either. As a result of technology and overnight shipping services, businesses do not have to be near their customers, and workers do not have to be near their co-workers. Consequently, addressing the dropout crisis now will increase the United States' global competitiveness later.

"Addressing the dropout crisis now will also decrease future societal costs. Research shows that high school dropouts are more likely to commit crimes and more likely to become a teen parents. Therefore, addressing the dropout crisis now will significantly decrease societal costs such as incarceration, welfare, and public housing later.

"The amendment that I am offering will restore essential services that help retain students who are at risk of dropping out — services such as strengthening teacher effectiveness, making education more relevant for students, and ensuring that every student has a personal relationship with school personnel.

"The amendment also restores summer enrichment services. We know that students who have something constructive to do over the summer are less likely to commit crimes and more likely to retain the information they learned during the school year. Most importantly, we know that students who have something constructive to do over the summer are less likely to drop out.

"There are dropout prevention services that are successful. Those services should be expanded. There are also dropout prevention services that are unsuccessful. Those services should be cut.

"Mr. Chairman, for these reasons I am offering this amendment to restore the dropout prevention services that the "Setting New Priorities in Education Spending Act" proposes to cut. This amendment specifically restores dropout prevention services that are not duplicative and authorized in other sections of ESEA. Dropout prevention services ensure that the nation's high school students — and the nation itself — succeed.

"Therefore, I urge my colleagues to support this amendment."

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